"Old Familiar Faces": *Frankenstein*, Anachronism, and Late Style

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> It is too late to be ambitious. We cannot hope to live so long in our names as some have done in their persons; one face of Janus holds no proportion to the other.[1]

The concept of late style, which describes a complex of traits regarded as characteristic of texts written in the final stages of an author's life, has had a fitful critical history, rising to attention and receding as circumstances grow propitious, as recently they have with particular conviction.[2] All extant studies, no matter their chosen object of study, credit (or blame) Romanticism with having conceived their central category. Theodor Adorno thus frames his seminal 1934 essay on late style as "an interpretation of Beethoven"[3]; Edward Said in his 2006 book stages a "return to the [late] eighteenth century" as a prerequisite to reading twentieth-century late texts[4]; and, closer to the present, Gordon McMullan cannot but invoke the Romantics in his study of Shakespeare's late works, arguing that "prior to the latter years of the eighteenth century, the idea of late writing as we understand it now did not exist […] it was invented as a by-product of the emergence of the Romantic idea of individual stylistic development

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[1] Thomas Browne, *Hydrotaphia: Urne-Burial*, *or, a Discourse of the Sepulchral Urns Lately Found in Norfolk* (1658) as quoted by Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826) 214.

[2] Amongst recent contributions, I would especially note Jacques Khalip, *Last Things: Disastrous Form from Kant to Hujar* (New York: Fordham UP, 2018), Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen, and Britten* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2015), and Claire Colebrook, "Extinct Theory," *Theory after Theory*, edited by Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 2011) 62–72. While evidently influenced by the critical tradition on the topic, Khalip and Colebrook do not explicitly invoke the concepts of lateness or late style.

[3] Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trsl. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) 125.

[4] Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Vintage, 2006) 25.

and thus of the newly reconstructed direct relationship between life and work."[5] Similarly, Ben Hutchinson opens his investigation of the ways in which late writing has determined modern literature by studying the Romantics, noting that he must "logically start from late romanticism on account of the fact that the idea of lateness understood as late style is a romantic construct."[6] Late style, and the emotional and philosophical stance of lateness whence it proceeds, appears so intrinsically Romantic that its attribution to any artwork created before the 1780s must be regarded as problematic, occasional claims for its prescient development in Shakespeare, Bernini, and Palestrina notwithstanding.[7]

While typically presented as self-evident, assertions of the Romantic origins of lateness rarely rise above the level of a perfunctory gesture, hastily inserted to stabilise a fluid concept of makeshift denotation, variously indicating "a trope, a critical construct […], a genre"[8] surmised to be expressive of a belated sentiment. The frequency with which otherwise difficult or startling texts and authors are made tractable when framed as late suggests the term corresponds to a discernible phenomenon; if late style is to have any critical meaning, however, if it is not to remain "the last of the great overarching critical ideas to be brought before the jury of theoretical or postthe-

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5 Gordon McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing: Authorship in the Proximity of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP) 192.

6 Ben Hutchinson, *Lateness and Modern European Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016) 18.

7 See Catherine M. Soussloff, "Old Age and Old-Age Style in the 'Lives' of Artists: Gianlorenzo Bernini," *Art Journal*, 46 (1987): 115–21 and Giuseppe Baini, *Memorie storico-critiche della vita e delle opere di Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina* (Rome: Società Tipografia, 1828): esp. 422–23. Curiously, the restriction of lateness to Romanticism is often used to focus criticism of analyses judged overly tinged by Romantic ideas. Said's account of late style, for instance, has been deprecated as an unthinking replication of "the romantic understanding of lateness." (Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles, "Introduction: Late Style and its Discontents," *Late Style and its Discontents* [Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016] 5.) It is left unclear what a *non*-Romantic conception of lateness might involve.

8 Gordon McMullan, "The 'Strangeness' of George Oppen: Criticism, Modernity, and the Conditions of Late Style", *Late Style and its Discontents*, ed. Sam Smiles and Gordon McMullan (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016) 36.

oretical scepticism"[9], it requires a more thorough theorisation and historicisation, which requires its referral to the period so often made to undergird its definition. This article, then, seeks to understand lateness through Romanticism. The view here proposed, broad yet firmly anchored in Romantic conceptions of literature and its role in history, entails that the biographic angle currently favoured by critics must recede in favour of an epochal or generational perspective. No longer exclusively a phenomenon precipitated by a highly particularised sense of an ending made legible in individual bodies and minds, as 'the last or late period of life, the decay of the body, the onset of ill health or other factors that even in a younger person bring on the possibility of an untimely end'[10], lateness may thus begin to emerge as a privileged entry into the question of a writer's place in time as it plays in Romanticism and beyond. This article will develop Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a test case for these claims: a paradoxically early articulation of lateness, written prior to the event conventionally assumed to propel Shelley into a late style, this novel, I will argue, provides one of the period's most incisive developments of belatedness, both as a philosophical and stylistic construct.

Romanticism was late before it was ever early, consistently presenting itself as coming late even to its own arrival. Reflections on the centrality of lateness occur as early as Wordsworth's 1799 *Prelude*, and feature with even greater urgency in the writings of second-generation authors like Byron, who sighs that "as the last of my race, I must wither away" as early as 1808.[11] While toiling underground to undo Ro-

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[9] McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing* 16.

[10] Said, *On Late Style*, 6.

[11] George Gordon, Lord Byron, "When I Rov'd, a Young Highlander," *The Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (New York: Macmillan, 1907): 65. See Fiona Stafford, *The Last of the Race: The Growth of a Myth from Milton to Darwin* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) 160–96.

mantic confidence in its capacity for radical renovation from the movement's very moment of inception[12], lateness first properly commences its codification as a discursive and stylistic structure in the late 1810s through the 1840s, through the efforts of those Romantics whose moniker bears testimony to their incontrovertible lateness. A designation previously rare in Anglo-Saxon criticism (but exceedingly common in German studies and musicology), or at any rate unsystematically applied, late Romanticism has been on a tentative increase as a term that might demarcate the 1820s and beyond as a separable subperiod.[13] The late Romantics differ from mainline Romanticism in that they understand themselves through two events taken to presage the undoing of the Romantic aspiration for a cosmopolitan and organic politics, the double defeat of Napoleon (in1814 and 1815) and the Peterloo Massacre (1819); both epochal events countersigned by the perversely timely deaths of leading Romantic thinkers and writers in the early 1820s and the early 1830s. Thomas Lovell Beddoes's response to Percy Bysshe Shelley's drowning may serve as a representative articulation of the belatedness that vexes those Romantics perplexed to find themselves outliving those whom they would lionise as the greatest among them. In the deaths of Shelley, Byron, and others, survivors read the auguries of a world fast outpacing yesteryear's ideas and ideals:

> The disappearance of Shelley from the world, seems, like the tropical setting of that luminary […] to which his poetical genius can alone be compared with refer-

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[12] Indeed, Romanticism may be argued to commence only as the Enlightenment, confronted with an ending it cannot recuperate in its rationalist teleology, generates its own early, as yet relatively inchoate flowering of late style, which it thence bequeathes to its successors. Kant's late work is a case in point, esp. his "The End of All Things," *Religion and Rational Theology*, trsl. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 221.

[13] See Angela Esterhammer, "Improvisation, Speculation, and Mediality: The Late-Romantic Information Age," *Europäische Romantik: Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven der Forschung*, ed. Helmut Hühn and Joachim Schiedermair (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015): 229–37.

> ence to the companions of his day, to have been followed by instant darkness and owl-season […] if I were the literary weather-guesser for 1825 I would safely prognosticate fog, rain, blight in due succession for it's dullard months—P.S. Shelley's book [*Posthumous Poems*]—This is a ghost indeed. […] What would he not have done if ten years more, that will be wasted upon the lives of unprofitable knaves and fools, had been given to him.[14]

In reading for lateness, critics have particularly noted the compelling figure cut by Mary Shelley, whose late-Romantic writings cogently demonstrate the stakes of Romantic lateness. It is perhaps inevitable that scholars have turned primarily to those texts that Shelley wrote in the aftermath of her personal experience of the dwindling of Romanticism, with *The Last Man* (1826) attracting particular attention.[15] This article, however, would argue that Shelley's *entire* oeuvre is characterised by an increasingly urgent inscription in lateness. In thus tracing a continuity from the earliest to the latest late work, from *Frankenstein* to *Falkner*, I seek to resist the bisection through which Shelley's oeuvre is often read; a model which places *Frankenstein* into a class all its own, and gathers up the ensuing output in a loose post-*Frankenstein* quire, often refocused under a post-Percy heading: as a result, even now the diagnosis continues to hold that "*Frankenstein* has become split off from the corpus of Mary Shelley."[16] The critical reception of Shelley, then, replicates the (self-)division of the Romantic period

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[14] Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Letter to Thomas Forbes Kelsall (25 August 1825), *Thomas Lovell Beddoes: An Anthology*, edited by F. L. Lucas (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1932): 2–3.

[15] See Hutchinson, *Lateness and Modern European Literature*, 52–58; and J. Jennifer Jones, "The Art of Redundancy: Sublime Fiction and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*," *Keats–Shelley Review* 29.1 (2015): 25–41.

[16] *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*, ed. Audrey Fisch, Anne K. Mellor, and Esther H. Schor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 7. Consider, for instance, Esther Schor, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. Esther Schor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), which splits its discussion of Shelley's oeuvre into a section on *Frankenstein* and a second section on her later novels.

into an early, mature, and late phase, with critics occasionally divided as to the precise position of individual works. There is merit to this division: to Shelley, as to many of her contemporaries, the end of Romanticism is an epochal shift rendered vividly manifest in private crises, and her writing bears the impress of her life. Following Percy's shipwreck on 8 July 1822, she thus announces, through the semi-private medium of her letters and diary, the suspension of all creative activity, excepting the compulsive transcription of her husband's obsequies.[17] One notable instance of Shelley's withdrawal from a literary life is to be found in her diary entry for 15 May 1824, written in response to Byron's passing:

> What do I *do* here? Why ~~and~~ am I doomed to live on seeing all expire before me? God grant I may die young—A new race is springing about me—At the age twenty six I am in the condition of an aged person—all my old friends are gone—I have no wish to form new […] [the grave] ~~its~~ ~~its~~ to the dearer and best beloved beings which it has torn from me, now adds that resplendent Spirit, ~~whom~~ ~~I~~ ~~loved~~ whose departure leaves the dull earth ~~still~~ dark~~er~~ as midnight.[18]

Their bleakness notwithstanding, Shelley's professions of grief increasingly serve as the foundation to a project intent on a perpetuation of Romantic models and ideas. In thus recording the gradual restoration of her powers, she effectively performs on a personal level a process of halting recovery and reinvention that would go on to mark an entire generation of stragglers. Even "tho' double sorrow comes ~~th~~ when I feel that

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[17] Shelley, *Journals* 1: 417–24. Shelley's journal also includes a few brief entries detailing funeral arrangements, a handful of disjointed emotional reflections on Shelley's death, and an exhaustive transcription of Edward Welleker Williams's journal. The latter had died together with Percy.

[18] Shelley, *Journals* 2: 478–79. Emphasis mine.

Shelley no longer reads & approves of what I write"[19]; even though the Romantic ideal of companionable authorship has been fractured, those who yet remain may find purpose in a productive reclamation of the generational demise that has become "the last story I shall have to tell."[20] On 2 October 1822, in a note she asserts ought to be regarded as her first entry following Percy's death, Shelley characterises the writing she is henceforth to conduct in terms of a solemn, if as yet underspecified duty:

> [o]n the Eighth of July I finished my journal. […] The date still remains, the fatal 8th—a monument to show that all ended then. And I begin again?—oh. never! But several motives induce me […] First, I have now no friend. For eight years ~~my~~ ~~soul~~ I communicated with unlimited freedom with one whose genius, far transcending mine, awakened & guided my thoughts […] Now I am alone! Oh, how alone! […] As I write, let me think what He would have said, if speaking thus to him, he could have answered me. […] Father, Mother, friend, husband children—all made—as it were—the team that ~~dragged~~ ~~me~~ conducted me here, & now all […] are gone, and I am left to fulfil my task.[21]

While late Romanticism conceives of itself as the closing statement to a far brighter period, now irretrievably closed off, it is not without a capacity for creativity, even for critique. Shelley may fashion her late writing as an ancillary offshoot to her husband's, and accordingly insert notes in her diary stipulating that the present has no meaning if not through him, deeming 1823 little more than "[t]he year *following*

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[19] Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, 2 vols., eds. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 2: 483.

[20] Mary Shelley, *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 3 vols., ed. Betty T. Bennett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980–88) 1: 250.

[21] Mary Shelley, *Journals* 2: 429–32. By "friend" Shelley presumably refers to Williams (n19).

1822"[22], but she does grow confident enough to claim an authorial identity all her own, often by noting the superannuation of Percy's overlarge ambitions. *The Last Man* thus resurrects Byron and Shelley only to demonstrate the unfeasibility of their proposals, and *Frankenstein*, in its 1831 edition, begs to separate itself from spousal associations. "I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband," Shelley stresses in the latter text, "and yet but for his incitement, it would never have taken the form in which it was presented."[23]

Frankenstein does not require the events of 1822 or 1824 to acquire overtones of lateness. The novel is late long before even its 1831 preface reads the text through autobiographical events in musing that "its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall see no more." While attractively explicit, Shelley's latter-day rereading is conducted irrespective of the book's contents, and might conceivably have applied to any work produced prior to Percy's death, prompting her to reflect that this one instance of late reading "is for myself; my readers have nothing to do with these associations."[24] In thus contracting *Frankenstein*'s late potential to the contingently contextual by declaring such echoes strictly for her own consumption, she denies the fundamental ways in which her pre-emptively late sensibilities integrally animate *Frankenstein*.

Even though Shelley's late gestures peak in the early 1820s, at the first dusking of lateness as it has been seen to manifest in periodical terms, she mirrors her fellow

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[22] Mary Shelley, *Journals* 2: 449. Emphasis mine.

[23] Mary Shelley, *The Annotated Frankenstein*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Ronald Levao (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2012) 339.

[24] Shelley, *Frankenstein* 340.

travellers in developing a sense of an ending long before the events that confirm the accuracy of her intuitions. Well aware that her late condition brings to realisation a longstanding Romantic trope, she muses that "[m]ethinks I was born to that end alone, since all events seem to ~~drag~~ lead me to that one point."[25] The structures and purposes of this oddly early lateness can only fully come into view, I would argue, by attending to Mark Redfield's and Paul de Man's insistence on temporality as the key identifying trait of Romanticism.[26] That is, considerable purchase on the hazy outline of lateness may be gained by recognising that the concept grows most productive in light of Romantic theories of time and historicity. With the Romantics, as James Chandler observes, "between, say 1770 and 1830," there arose a new, presently still dominant understanding of time, a "radical historiographical transformation"[27], organised around the principles of universality and organicity. Romantic historiography demands a highly conscious process of construction in which the undifferentiated flow of time is to be partitioned into distinct eras and subperiods, each endowed with an internal logic describing a tripartite narrative plan of growth, maturity, and decline. This scheme, moreover, can be applied across a wide range of process, all of which are presumed to behave like individual lives: the construction of history, then, grows into an activity through which persons, generations, nations, and indeed the globe at large all seek to determine themselves. A concept that presupposes an organic and multi-planar concept of temporality, lateness at once affirms and resists the Romantic understanding of

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25 Shelley, *Journals* 2: 432.

26 Marc Redfield, *The Politics of Aesthetics: Nationalism, Gender, Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003) esp. 33–34, and Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983) 187–228.

27 James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998) 100.

historicity. It reinforces the latter because it pivots on "the idea of organic growth and the subsequent application of the idea to the particular growth seen in the mind and the art of the individual artist"[28]; and because it demonstrates that (post-)Romantic writing telescopes between multiple levels of analysis: late work, after all, is "the product of an *individual* or extraordinary talent and [] at the same time the expression of an *epoch*."[29] Yet lateness also unsettles linear conceptions of history, in that it captures phenomena that fall outside a historiographical model often given, against its own axioms, to bracketing the specter of decay and death by imposing an overarching narrative of progress onto the successive passing of generations. The depressive view on which Romantic historiography turns is thus salvaged by the belief, as Coleridge has it, that even if "[t]he moral being has sometimes crawled, sometimes strolled, sometimes walked, sometimes run," still "it has at all times been moving onward."[30] Against the Hegelian notion of an "end of history," latterly embraced by Francis Fukuyama, which promises a liberating end state to the development of human culture[31], the late stylist designates himself a denizen of the past, rendering him an anachronism in the present; a recalcitrant trace that defies the orderly passage of time, contradicting declarations that "the survival, the residue, the holdover, the archaic" has "finally been swept away without a trace."[32] The anachronism, which functions as

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[28] McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing* 138.

[29] McMullan and Smiles, "Introduction: Late Style and its Discontents" 5. Emphases mine.

[30] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Hint for a New Species of History," *Omniana*, *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: William Pickering, 1836) 1: 316. Also see Chandler, *England in 1819* 108.

[31] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). While often attributed to Hegel *via* Kojève, the thesis of the end of history has a rather problematic status in the former's work. See Eric Michael Dale, *Hegel, The End of History, and the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014) 1–12; 100–103.

[32] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1991) 309.

"a measurable form of dislocation"[33] of the teleology implicit in modern historiography, thus constitutes the chief method through which the late author may disarticulate their life and their texts and thereby open a site of "emergence [for] unrecognised possibility."[34]

Since lateness describes the pressures of Romantic historicity as these manifest in and across individual lives, its symptoms are most evidently legible in *Frankenstein*'s three main characters. Each is burdened by grandiose visions; each is destined to be jolted out of their ambitions; and each is compelled to relay to future generations the narrative of his failure. The eponymous doctor is thus introduced as one formerly impassioned by a mad quest for a total biological revolution, who consequent to the inevitable collapse of his designs and the ensuing eradication of his circle of friends, each of whom is introduced as prototypically Romantic soul, lapses into a horribly lucid interlude between life and death. Previously avouching himself "like the Arabian who had been buried with the dead, and found a passage to life", his catastrophic creation consigns him to a deathly afterlife, in which he has "lost every thing, and cannot begin life anew."[35] Victor, then, is late in that he survives the crash of his ideals and the extermination of his comrades; his ambitions, moreover, thematize Romantic lateness in that they encompass the extension of physical and philosophical life beyond its natural limits—the very end to the future that so perturbed Kant on the eve of his own demise. The fruit of Victor's obsession with mortality is similarly freighted with the markers of belatedness. Frankenstein's creature figures as a second and secondary

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[33] James Chandler, *England in 1819* 107.

[34] Jerome Christensen, *Romanticism at the End of History* 10. Removed emphasis.

[35] Shelley, *Frankenstein* 109.

generation: a collage of sources cobbled together to embody and thereby actualize his author's aspirations, he turns out so successful in presenting the sacrifices required to secure a Hegelian end of history that he becomes universally repellent; so desirous of reconfiguring the world into a perfect community, moreover, that he turns out destructive of the very groups he seeks to join. Victor and his progeny, in short, personify a structure of Romantic lateness centered on the latter's negative aspects: locked in a compact to escape the anxieties of history through an affirmative act of creation, they ultimately cause the irradiation of the very movement they strive to keep in suspended animation.

Walton, by contrast, exemplifies an attenuated form of lateness; philosophically rather than genetically linked to Frankenstein and his dread progeny, he doubles as a repository for their stories and a focus for a late critique of mature Romanticism. He, too, aims for a perfect friendship, and he, too, is engaged in an intrepid mission of discovery that may well turn out fatal. Observing his militantly Romantic bent with alarm, Victor frames the story of his ruination as a means to disabuse Walton of his attachment to a wrong-headed romanticism, bereft of any internal capacity for resistance. In 1818, he offers a relatively understated rebuke of his executor's ambitions, musing that "[y]ou seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did […] I do not know that the relation of my misfortunes will be useful to you."[36] In 1831, articulating a more definite poetics of lateness, he renders explicit the tendency of his account in exclaiming "[u]nhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from

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[36] Shelley, *Frankenstein* 84.

your lips!"[37] The intercalated narrative that the creature passes on to Victor, that Victor thence relays to Walton, and that Walton finally communicates to his sister, establish a daisy-chain of progressively later characters, roping into the sequence of inheritors even the latter-day reader by way of the narratee. Each of these readerly instances is charged with passing on the story even further, honouring the twin duties of lateness, accuracy and revaluation. Just as Victor impresses on Walton that "I would not that a mutilated [account] should go down to posterity", he also implores him to "learn my miseries, and do not seek to increase your own."[38]

Frankenstein invites a late perspective not because of its author's future travails, nor only because of its prescient dramatisation of the origins and consequences of Romantic lateness: through a series of disjointing gestures, its entire narrative is positioned athwart conventional chronology. Victor inscribes his experiments in an anachronistic enthusiasm for the prophecies of alchemy rather than the burgeoning sciences, embracing the latter only insofar as they further his designs. His great work defies the exigencies of the present: "Good God!" one exponent of modernity duly protests, "My dear Sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew."[39] In a similar vein, Walton notes that his polar expedition and his yearning for intimate friendship both proceed from a sentimental disposition ill-matched to the prevailing pragmatism of the present. "You may deem me romantic, my dear sister," he reflects, hitting on the term that will go on to describe the movement he belatedly identifies with, "but I bitterly feel the want of a friend."[40] The creature, finally, derives much of his skewed

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[37] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, edited by Susan J. Wolfson (London: Longman, 2006) 193.

[38] Shelley, *Frankenstein* 307.

[39] Shelley, *Frankenstein* 102.

[40] Shelley, *Frankenstein* 70.

philosophy from an overheard reading of Volney's 1791 *Ruins of Empires*, a treatise that perverts the conservatism implicit in linear historiography by highlighting only the certainty that all nations must ultimately waste away. In declaring for this cynical vision of a catastrophic future, and ignoring Volney's revolutionary buoyancy, the monster prefigures the crestfallen post-Waterloo radical.

Anachronism most impacts *Frankenstein* in its recreation of Romantic literary history. While the novel follows the contemporary practice of obfuscating precise dates whenever it references its internal present, a timeline may nevertheless be mapped onto its allusions to various realia, which exercise reveals the text's chief incidents are to be situated between 1791 and 1797.[41] This temporal frame is destabilized, however, by numerous slippages. Blithely ignoring they are quoting from texts yet to be published, the three protagonists invoke Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"; Hunt's "Rimini"; Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"; and, most appropriately, Percy Bysshe's "Mutability," which reflects on the unbiddable passage of time, and Charles Lamb's lament that "[a]ll, all are gone, the old familiar faces."[42] These instances of reverse memorialization establish an intertextual architecture that allows *Frankenstein* to inhabit and transcend its moment. Its narrative is at once early and late; at once situated in the early 1790s and, through the dates of publication associated with the texts it repeatedly references, firmly anchored in the two years Romanticism chooses as the pivots of its history—1798, which marks the mythologized publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the commencement of the movement's mature phase, and 1816, which heralds the onset of its decline. If through such gestures "calendrical accuracy, even

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[41] Wolfson and Levao, *The Annotated Frankenstein* 353–75. Also see Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London: Routledge, 1998) 54–55.

[42] Shelley, *Frankenstein* 76, 118, 241, 242, 167, 102.

when most asserted by characters within the novel, seems maddeningly elusive"[43] in *Frankenstein*, it is not so much because Shelley is uninterested in historical accuracy, but because she is at once recreating a fading period and preventing any stabilizing interpretation of that period. It is through such strategies of dislocation she also signals her creative difference from Percy, who sternly argued against the dignity of the anachronistic mode—in *The Cenci*, for instance, he is pained to emphasize he has "endeavored as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were."[44] It is here, too, in upending the strictures of non-late historiography and signalling reservations regarding their application to literary writing that *Frankenstein* most achieves a late perspective on Romanticism, and prepares Shelley's later late work.

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[43] Wolfson and Levao, *The Annotated Frankenstein* 354.

[44] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*, ed. D.H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977) 240. See Chandler, *England in 1819* 109–10.